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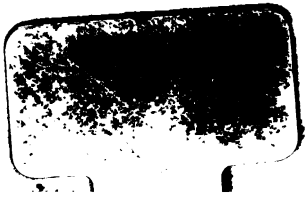

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THE

Mysterious Florentine.

VOL. IV.

THE

Mysterious Florentine.

A Romance,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY CAROLINE SINCLAIR.

Cast off your veil, mystery;
Show us each ghastly feature;
Pooh! not ghastly—insignificant,
When truth reveals you—such as you are.

VOL. IV.

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THE

Mysterious Florentine.

CHAP. XXIV.

MANFREDONI beheld the struggle with sympathy; he saw the filial sorrow of Nicolo, and for awhile attempted not to sooth him, rightly judging the effort would have been a vain one. At length Nicolo broke silence—

"My father," said he, "believed me guilty, and expired accusing his unnatural son."

"Compose yourself, my dear friend," said Manfredoni, "the perfidy of Viralva, be assured, will not go unrequited."

"Your patrimony you will not be deprived of, for the Senor Marascotti is a man of honour," interrupted Nicolo, "but my solicitude springs from another source. You who possess sensibility, can well imagine my distress."

"I do," said Angelo, pressing his hand, "but rest contented, the hour of retribution I trust is arrived; Viralva will not escape punishment. The demands of justice must be complied with. I have a tale, a most important tale to relate.

"You are acquainted with the catastrophe which induced me to join the scene of war, with the vain hope of burying in tumult my own inquietude.

"Through the interest of the late marchese I was enabled to prosecute my design.

"During my absence, my generous benefactor married the daughter of the Conte Della Torrini, whom you well knew. I did not behold this valuable friend for many years, and on my return he presented his son Lorenzo to me, a fine youth of sixteen, in whom all the virtues of the father shone conspicuous.

"I contemplated his dawning merit with secret satisfaction, anticipating the period when those qualities so promising, would be called into action, and realize the expectations of all.

"Never were parents happier than the marchese and marchesa, and their felicity imparted to me no inconsiderable

share, but soon their prospects became clouded; the amiable marchesa was attacked by a painful and lingering illness, which terminated her existence.

"To console the afflicted marchese for the invaluable loss he had sustained, devolved on me, and to fulfil this pleasing painful task, I employed every care. But alas! I was a soldier, and could not command my own time—duty, imperious duty, called me away at that momentous period; and to his sorrow I left the afflicted mourner.—Never shall I forget our parting.

"Laying aside all rank, he gave vent to those feelings, that ever are cherished by a noble heart. Pathetic indeed were his adieus!—and last adieus they fatally proved; for I never beheld him more.

"On my return, as usual, I repaired

to the castello, but what sad intelligence awaited me! Altidore Viralva, as successor, had taken possession of the castello, and with the utmost indifference informed me his brother was dead.

" ' But your nephew,' said I, ' the young Lorenzo, where is he?'

" ' He sleeps with his father,' he replied, ' but why the question?—Do you think me a usurper?' he demanded with haughty inquiry.

" The news he had imparted had nearly overpowered me, so that I was ill fitted for altercation—a deep sigh was my only answer, and to indulge without restraint, the poignancy of my feelings, I left him.

" An untoward accident compelled

me once more to enter the dwelling of my enemy. What were my sensations on the discovery? Keener were they than the wounds that made me an unwilling debtor to his hospitality.

"The stiletto of banditti deprived me of sense, and in that pitiable state some herdsmen bore me to the castello.—Viralva was from home, and it was only on his return I knew the full extent of my misfortune, for such I considered receiving a favour from him.

"A meeting took place between us, and a relapse was the consequence; thus was I, from this cruel circumstance, confined beneath the same roof with Altidore much longer than I could have wished.

"The injuries of Almeria, which were ever present to my memory, were

by the death of the marchese more firmly imprinted, if possible, on my mind—that sincere friend was now no more, and I freed from my promise.

" Ever anxious, ever solicitous, for an unworthy brother, my word was pledged to him that I would forbear, nor seek the punishment due to his injustice.

" ' But he is dead,' said I mentally, ' and cannot share the disgrace of Altidore.' My pulse beat quick, but honour checked the rash impulse. I could not thus infringe the laws of hospitality, and lest I should find passion too strong for reason, I departed.

" But whither to go, I knew not, the neat appearance of this cottage struck me. I spoke to Benigna, and complied

with her terms; the retired situation of her humble dwelling pleased me—beside this, I had another reason for liking the spot, (or rather let me impute my stay to that wonder-working Providence, who worketh by unseen means,) for I made a most important discovery, which I will relate to you.

Nicolo smiled, and perhaps mentally said, "It is time you should, for the first part of your story prepared me for some uncommon event."

Manfredoni resumed, "One day, through, I may say, inadvertence, I found myself before the gates of the castello, unpleasant remembrances, which the hateful sight ever brought to my memory, had just been banished, when who should I meet but Lorenzo di Viralva, that dear youth whom I had long

mourned as numbered with the dead. Ecstacy, surprise, and every emotion, by turns I indulged.

" Lorenzo with rapture clasped my hand, and with unutterable joy asked me a thousand questions, which I could not answer for fear of being overheard. ' It is dangerous,' I said, ' thus to be seen,' and I led him to the cottage.

" There uninterrupted we conversed freely; of him I learned all the distressing particulars of his father's death. ' That melancholy event had no sooner taken place,' said he, ' than my treacherous uncle, with feigned concern, undertook the charge of conducting the funeral: this duty, as he called it, performed, by way of calling off my attention, he proposed a short excursion—it was there he completed his fell purpose,

and devoted his unfortunate nephew to a life of captivity.

" Nicolo shuddered, appalled at the recital. ' Can it be true !' said he, with every feature distorted with rage.

" It is, my friend," replied Manfredoni, " Viralvi, remorseless villain, has immured within a dungeon wall, the son of his only brother, merely to assume his title; and stifled conscience to enjoy wealth, that imparts no happiness to him.

" Wretched, when others are seeking calm repose, he wanders a guilty self-accused wretch. When poverty is bliss, who would not be poor? Ambition, thou torment, thou giver of ungratified wishes, who would not pity the slave deluded by thee? Thou showest an

eminence, the ascent is strewed with flowers, while fairy hope elevates to the sight, some unattained good, in the pursuit of which your victim successless goes; for the higher he reaches, he exclaims, one step more, and my expectations will be repaid—vain hope, the illusion beguiles, till death and disappointment terminates the life of the hapless pursuer.

"So it is with Viralva, unsocial and forlorn, he knows no joy, can find no peace, and envies the meanest of his vassals.

"Either from capriciousness, or to further some of his dark schemes, he most unexpectedly gave to the unfortunate Lorenzo permission to quit in the day time, his solitary abode.

"Well pleased, the luckless captive

accepted the long denied boon, the fruit of which was our meeting.

"I have sworn by my hopes to assert his rights, or perish in the attempt.

"And in me," replied Nicolo, "he shall find a zealous friend. Our efforts joined will no doubt make the usurper submissive. yield. My soul pants for the day, for much I wish to repay Viralva; he has marred my hopes, and to blight his I would even sacrifice happiness. When shall you see Lorenzo?"

"To-morrow," said Manfredoni, "we have appointed to meet, unless the changeable Altidore wills it otherwise—probably he may repent of his lenity, if so, I know not what to do."

"Let not that damp your spirits," returned Nicolo—"no power on earth shall restrain this arm from doing the orphan justice. I have friends—my relation Marascotti, would not be backward should necessity require his interference; but trust to me, I am resolute, or had not so well supported years of confinement in the subterraneous abode of Caprana. But now, thank Providence, I am free, and if I do not use that freedom in a manner befitting me, may my next step be betrayed by some insidious ensnarer."

The two friends joined hands, and both enthusiastic in the same cause, vowed eternal amity.

With impatience they counted the hours that must necessarily intervene before an introduction could take place.

Manfredoni, delighted with the prospect of emancipating Lorenzo, suffered no other subject to engross his thoughts; much as he valued Nicolo, and sympathised in his misfortunes, they were with him but a secondary consideration.

Gratitude, friendship, and every endearing association encreased the interest he already felt for Lorenzo.

"Departed excellence!" exclaimed he, almost fancying he was conversing with the marchese, "were it possible you could know what is passing in this lower world, or take cognizance of earthly affairs, you would approve of my exertions. Pray for their success, and make your anxious friend happy by knowing that you are so. But he knows not what has passed—Heaven

forbid he should. Altidore! Altidore! could not Nature soften that adamantine heart of thine? Must you, relentless, persecute the innocent? But pity is a stranger to you — or Almeria, dear sister, beloved of my soul, forgive me— pardon your brother, that thus he suffers your betrayer to triumph in iniquity. But Almeria in life nobly forgave—will she in a state of beatitude harbour revenge? Impossible!"

With agitation he paced his room; imagination had begun her work, and the picture of fancy, such as he ardently wished it.

Already Lorenzo was reinstated in his hereditary honours; he saw him fulfil his duty with the equity of his father; he heard applauding crowds speak in his praise. His bosom glowed, but soon the boisterous exultation be-

came refined to a purer sentiment—was not Viralva his friend, his patron, his benefactor—could he do less?

The feelings of Nicolo were similar, and like Manfredoni, he longed for the moment that should see Viralva robbed of all his false greatness, and strip from him those honours he had basely usurped. Revenge expired as justice existed in his bosom, and became predominant. He felt for Lorenzo with all the ardour of enthusiasm, and panted to redress his grievances.

"That Nicolo," said he, "whom he had consigned to oblivion, disgrace, and misery, shall assert his rights, avenge the oppressed, and give death to his hopes. How will a sight of me annihilate his towering expectations. In vain shall he seek a covert to hide his

diminished head. Who will afford him sanctuary?—Not those parasites who partook of his ill acquired wealth. Now will he hear severe animadversions on those errors that had escaped observation. Now will taunts and reproaches salute those ears attentive only to flattery. Where shall he find refuge? Not surely in the false blandishments of the deceitful Senora Montebino, for whose sake he acted the villain; and I his destined victim, my name abused; and, oh! my father, can I think of your sufferings, and not feel the fire of madness? You believed me a wretch—despised me, and perhaps deplored my very birth. Fatally has passion betrayed me—Portiri, to you I ascribe my misfortunes; your cowardice exposed me to the asaults of Viralva, or he had dared not sully my fair fame; but I will retaliate, most amply retaliate—ye pangs

unutterable, that agitated this heart; ye sighs of anguish that heaved this bosom, canst thou not bear testimony of the oath I took? Yes, yes, memory is tenacious, and forgets not days of misery, and nights of horror! Fierce raging madness, whose only alloy was the revenge I promised myself. Well, have I bound me by an oath, and shall I not execute it? But for this had Nicolo, Conte Nicolo's only son, survived disgrace, supported captivity, and eat the bread of ignominy. Let me not dwell on my wrongs, lest I grow outrageous, and suffer not the monster to live. Be calm my soul, the hour is mine, and if I do not embrace it, may disappointment mar my prospects—may ill success crown my hopes: how long this Lorenzo loiters — would he were come. I love not delay, but hold: he is the slave of a tyrant, and may be this

very moment deploring a fate I will soon revert. Here comes Manfredoni—what tidings bring he?"

The friends interchanged looks, but spoke not; Lorenzo had outstaid the hour of appointment.

CHAP. XXV.

Joy, peace, and happiness presided at the pallazzo; the duca, supremely happy, had not now an ungratified wish. Ernesto and Rosalia, re-established in each other's good opinion, no longer remembered the incident which had for awhile protracted their bliss.

The credulity of Alonzo afforded them an inexhaustible fund of amusement, and he in turn recriminated on Ernesto, who hardly could refute the charge of suspicion alleged against him.

"What amends can you make the injured Montaldi?" sportively said Almanza.

"Circumstance places it out of my power," replied Almerini, "or I would grant the senor all he requires, save my Rosalia."

This obtained a good humoured laugh, in which Laurentini joined.

To hear Montaldi, even indirectly praised, afforded her the sincerest pleasure, for most passionately did she love that unfortunate being. The scenes of gaiety in which she was involved, prevented her mind from dwelling continually on the same object; hers was no unsocial disposition, and she could not behold others cheerful without becoming so herself.

The vivacity of Elvira imparted an equal share to her, and added to the festivity that reigned.

Numerous guests enlivened the exuberant spirits of Ernesto, among whom the Senor Portiri; he was the friend of Almanza, and found no difficulty in obtaining a similar honour from Ernesto. His pleasantry and good humour rendered him a favourite with all who knew him, and many sought his society, desirable for no other quality.

Portiri never contradicted, and reduced this pliability of temper to the standard of politeness. On discovering irritability in the disposition of his opponent, he contented himself with bestowing a look of dissent to some part of the company, who, doubtless admired his forbearance, and when occasion offered, complimented him thereon.

By this pacific mode he avoided many disputes, and never atoned for the ill effects his mirthful talents often produced, as in the case of the unfortunate Nicolo.

To the impetuosity of an headstrong youth, he gave the name of deliberate malice, and to shield his own pusillanimity, foully tarnished a once unsullied name.

Almanza, prejudiced in his favour, readily believed all he asserted; to witness the celebration of his nuptials with the Senora Rameraz, he had invited Portiri; and as that of Ernesto and Rosalia were to take place on the same day, his stay at the pallazzo, by a second invitation became prolonged.

The duca, never so happy as when contributing to the entertainment of his

friends, by the most agreeable variation of amusement, beguiled time till each day appeared only as an hour.

A party composed of many nobles, made an excursion to the duca's beautiful casino, the charmed eye, too much engaged to rest on one object, roved excursive over the whole. Examination was deferred, and in a scene so peaceful, human passions might be told to cease.

Ernesto marked the quick receding clouds, to fancy's eye pursued by the sun, like mortal grandeur, that rests not till humbler beings are lost in oblivion. He saw a struggling cloud contend, but soon it passed away; Almerini sighed, as with enthusiasm he exclaimed, "Ye noble energies of the soul, ye thoughts aspiring! Power of feeling, sensibilty's first born, why tell the lowly of their ills, since redress is not within their reach!

Should one indignant at unmerited suffering, assert his right, your potent grasp, oh! power, would crush at once. Thrice happy he, whose mind attuned by mediocrity, knows not his wrongs, because ambition has not taught him to feel them."

Portiri smiled at his rhapsody, and by way of changing the subject, made some judicious observations on the rest of the company.

Almerini, highly entertained, to enjoy his conversation more uninterrupted, imperceptibly withdrew from the party.

Portiri then indulged the versatility of his genius; time robbed of its length passed unheeded by them, till at length the involving shade of obscurity reminded them of their imprudence; they were beyond the hearing of their com-

panions, and knew not the way back. Ernesto, perplexed and disappointed, stood musing, unknowing how to act.

"Stay not thus inactive," said Portiri, "let us at least endeavour to retrieve our error. Opposite is the right road, I am persuaded."

Almerini was of a contrary opinion, and with much altercation, followed the lead of Portiri, all the way persisting he was wrong. The farther they walked the more dreary appeared their prospect; no friendly cot or communicative peasant could they behold.

Ernesto, out of all patience, declared he would not go a step farther, and turned back. Portiri, complaining of his obstinacy, was compelled to do the same.

"Let us mend our pace," said Alme-

rini, "it will soon be dark, and what do you think will be the feelings of our party if we do not join them?"

Portiri, convinced of the truth of his remark, could make no reply, and in silence they proceeded. The sable night drew on apace and seemed to mock all their efforts.

To the great joy of Ernesto he descried some well-known objects which beyond a doubt convinced him they were in the direct road; but then they must cross the forest.

"And who is afraid?" demanded Portiri.

"I am not," replied Ernesto; but should some of the evil spirits (so called) attack us in our way thither, what would you do?"

"Give them a warm reception. I fear no supernatural appearance, for I believe not such chimeras; and should banditti (for those I verily believe are the only enemies we have to dread) assail us, they shall find I am not to be easily intimidated."

"I hope your courage will not be called in question," said Ernesto; "but you would find opposition of very little avail."

"Be it so;" replied Portiri, offended at the raillery of Ernesto, who, disconcerted, and not in the best humour, was secretly blaming his obstinacy.

Portiri, relinquishing the arm he held, exclaimed, "It is moon-light; see how bright it shines."

"You are under a mistake," returned

Ernesto; "that which you discern is no common appearance; let us collected await the result."

Voices seemingly under the ground alarmed them; though loud and clear, they nevertheless could not distinguish what was spoke. Fearful shrieks and suppressed groans filled them with apprehension; the noise increased, and the whole forest re-echoed with the most discordant sounds. A tall majestic figure immerged from his concealment, and surveying Portiri and Almerini glided swiftly on; three others fantastically attired, followed and did the same.

Mute with surprise, Almerini attentively watched their actions; making motions to each other they proceeded at a swift rate. Not to be baffled, they kept up with them, till with the utmost rapidity they halted, and quickly turn-

ing down a defile had nearly eluded pursuit.

"Let us presevere," said Portiri, stimulating Ernesto to follow.

"I mean no otherwise," he replied, "but wish to act with discretion; should they observe we are watching, it might put them on their guard, whereas caution will deceive and suit our purpose much better."

Arrived at the extremity of the defile, they observed the men busily employed in removing a huge stone, which they concluded concealed the entrance of some subterraneous abode; the stone removed they beheld something glitter, which as the light of the torches reflected on it, they discovered to be a bright steel ring; this one of the men placed his hand on, and immediately a

trap-door lifted up; uttering some unintelligible words, a figure in grave habiliments issued forth, with solemnity he nodded to the rest, and by them supported, walked slowly on. The same ceremony was observed in closing the door; and for fear of being discovered on their return, Portiri persuaded Almerini to precede them. Bewildered and strangely perplexed with what he had seen, Ernesto followed his advice.

"We shall soon reach the pallazzo," said Portiri; "and I would we were there already."

"Are you tired of the adventure?" returned Ernesto. "It will serve to divert the company, and may in part atone for our absence."

"I fear we shall not gain credit, they will think we deal in the marvellous."

"I recollect on a similar occasion the duca disregarded my assertion, but when I adduce proofs so strong—"

"He will still disbelieve you," interrupted Portiri.

Ernesto was on the point of replying, but suddenly stopped short.

"What is the matter?" demanded Portiri.

"Look yonder," replied Ernesto; at the same time pointing to a gleam of light that faintly shone across the forest.

The direction was oblique, and Ernesto hesitated whether to follow it, or not.

"Who knows," said Portiri, "but what this may repay us for all the trou-

ble we have taken; should we be enabled to serve the unfortunate, I shall consider my fatigue as trifling."

"You inspire me," answered Ernesto, "with enthusiasm." And instantly they followed the light, but could not catch a glimpse of the holder.

Through each intricate maze they pursued, and by a quick turn, came within a few yards of the object of their search.

Now they paused to contemplate him. His size was tall, but his figure completely concealed by his dark flowing drapery; at every step he brandished a broken sword.

"It is some poor maniac;" whispered Portiri, "observe his actions."

He placed the lantern on the ground, threw down the mutilated sword, and by the most frantic gestures, excited their astonishment.

Clasping his hands, he exclaimed in an accent of despair, "When will my sorrows end? These wounds, how fast they bleed."

He then bared his arm, and exposed to view a deep gash below the elbow, from which the blood streaming flowed. Tearing off part of his dress, he discovered another beneath his shoulder.

"'Twas here the assassin struck," said he, in a low voice to himself; and snatching up the lamp, fled with the utmost velocity.

"What do you think of the scene

we have just witnessed?" demanded Ernesto, after he had gone.

"I am unusually interested," answered Portiri, "and but for the surprise that overpowered me, I should have addressed the unfortunate."

"It was also my intention," said Ernesto, "but his abrupt departure prevented me."

To alleviate the sufferings of the oppressed, was ever the active principle of Almerini, and the interest the stranger had already obtained in his bosom, felt an additional increase by the desire he had of obliging Portiri, who with evident disappointment, was with him, returning home.

Apparently worn out with fatigue, they beheld the stranger, seated on the

stump of a newly hewn tree. On beholding them he quitted his rugged seat, flung down the sword, and entreated them to stop. This was but anticipating their intention.

"Senors," said he, in a low voice, "behold before you one of the most unhappy of created beings; I fly from persecution, slavery, and death; redress is denied me; my enemy is rich and powerful, while I, alas! have no claim to urge, save that one which the unfortunate ever have on compassionate hearts."

His manner was impressive, and his words moving; they affected Ernesto.

"In what can I serve you?" said he; "you shall not find me a mere professor."

"Speak with freedom," said Portiri;

" and if my services, added to those of my friend, will assuage your sorrows, you may command them."

The stranger regarded them with attention, and sinking on his knees, expressed in the warmest language, his fervent gratitude.

" Forbear !" said Almerini, assisting him to rise. " Make known your wrongs."

" They are many and complicated," replied he, with a sigh; " but with your assistance, my proud foe may do me justice."

At that instant, a glare of light burst upon them.

" It is my merciless pursuers !" ex-

claimed the stranger, striking his breast with all the wildness of delirium. "But to-morrow night, if I can pre——"

The unfinished sentence died away unuttered, for the men had gained ground; scarce had he said, "to-morrow night, senors, for Heaven's sake!" when they appeared, and he narrowly escaped.

Ernesto and Portiri, with equal speed retreated, and when at a distance sufficient to ensure their safety, ventured to look who the intruders were, and discovered them to be the same men whom they had endeavoured to follow. Not well pleased at the interruption, they made the best of their way toward the pallazzo.

Arrived there in safety, the duca and

his friends welcomed them with the utmost joy; alarmed at their absence, and apprehensive of danger, their fears were great, but these, on seeing them safe, immediately subsided and gave place to pleasure.

Being asked the cause of their absence, they related the incident, making what reservation they thought proper. The tale was well received, but to more attentive observers might have excited suspicion, for prevarication and contradiction marked the whole.

Thinking their honour pledged to the stranger, they mentioned not their meeting with him, lest their design should be opposed, or subject them to an addition that might not be pleasing to him.

Consoled by the purity of his thoughts, Ernesto, in such a case, had recourse to

deception; he knew his father would endeavour to dissuade him from an undertaking he might consider dangerous, and rather than act contrary to his wishes he maintained silence.

CHAP. XXVI.

THERE is a something expressive in silence, and though it speaks not, it often conveys in mute language the feelings of the mind; it imparted to Manfredoni the sensations of Nicolo. The stay of Lorenzo created a thousand fears; Viralva had prevented him, perhaps confined him more secure.

"Should that prove the case, I am circumvented," said he.

Manfredoni was of the same opinion, but did not express it.

They rose to the welcome knock of Lorenzo. He accounted for his stay, and was introduced to Nicolo. A conversation of the most interesting nature took place.

Lorenzo, with magnanimity which could only be equalled by the goodness of his heart, extenuated the crimes of his uncle; the perfidy of Viralva claimed more his pity than resentment.

"He was the brother of my father," said he, "and I cannot behold his disgrace with pleasure."

"I had almost called you pusillanimous," replied Nicolo. "If he proved unmindful of your relationship, shall you regard it? Or is it mockery—misplaced compassion, that can, unmoved, view its own wounds, and weakly pity those of another? Retire, senor, you

are yet a boy, though maturity ought to have improved your judgment, it remains imbecile; your passions are ill directed, apathy and inactivity you have mistook for sensibility, or you could not thus passive submit to degradation, become a contented prisoner, and even excuse a tyrant."

"Say no more," replied Lorenzo; "I am resolute."

Manfredoni smiled approval, and though he secretly admired the sentiments of Lorenzo, he would not encourage him.

Nicolo, possessed of an excellent heart, disguised each noble impulse under the forbidden aspect of severity, and when he spoke with harshness it was often to conceal the emotions of that bosom which relented immediately on

beholding the misery of another; Viralva had blighted his early prospects, ruined his hopes, and for ever clouded life's cheerful day; released by almost a miracle from confinement, he forgot his own injuries in those of Lorenzo.

"The monster must not escape," said he, "lest he seeks other objects to make miserable; you, Manfredoni, have been a sufferer by his infernal arts."

He ceased, and would have given thousands to recall the words, for he observed the effect they produced. The revival had brought Almeria to the memory of her unhappy brother; he saw her as in life, meek, gentle, and unobtrusive; he saw her placid countenance ruffled, the mild lustre of her eyes bedimmed with tears, an incurable wound lacerated her once peaceful bosom, and Altidore di Viralva was the in-

flicter; the warm blood mantled in his cheeks, he rose from his seat, and with perturbation paced the room. Nicolo attempted not to speak, and Lorenzo, from a motive similar, preserved silence.

Manfredoni, ashamed of the weakness he had betrayed, endeavoured to compose himself, and entered into conversation with Nicolo. It was agreed that Lorenzo should return at the usual hour to the castello, and by the uniformity of his conduct, give Viralva no reason to suspect what was passing.

"Dissembler as he is," said Nicolo, "he will, if taken unawares, betray himself, and what he denies to justice or compunction he will yield to incaution."

Beguiled by hope, Lorenzo cheerfully bid his friends adieu, and meditating on

his present happy prospect, with the utmost unconcern met Viralva. He had been expecting his return, and with his usual restlessness of temper, thought the time longer than in general. A slave to his own fears, he within himself resolved that Lorenzo should be abridged of this privilege. " And that immediately," said he, " before it is too late."

His suspicions were more than confirmed when he surveyed his altered countenance.

" Where have you been ?" was the first question he put to Lorenzo.

His arbitrary manner disconcerted him, and with some degree of embarrassment he answered.

" You speak not the truth," remarked Viralva, looking at him stedfastly.

Lorenzo made no reply, leaving him to conjecture what he pleased.

"Your triumph shall be only for this night," said he, with a malignant sneer; "for directly you return to close confinement, you will then have no inducement to betray confidence; and he who exposes another to temptation may be considered his accomplice."

With joy he beheld the quick transition of Lorenzo, who nearly overpowered by his unexpected resolution, could not conceal his sorrow. How could he inform his friends of the change; they might think him inattentive, and withhold their interference.

When Viralva left him he gave way to despair, and truly in the language of Nicolo, deplored his own weakness, or

that ill-bestowed compassion which had induced him to pity one unworthy of the least clemency.

"He considers me not," said he, in a tone of self-reproach; "it is his pleasure to make me miserable—he forgets that I am his nephew, and I will prove unmindful that he is my uncle. But I have lost the only opportunity Providence presented to me, I shall see my friends no more. Too well, Nicolo, do I merit your appellation of fickle and wavering, I have marred myself; but the Senor Manfredoni will not forsake me; he will find me out.

Then recollecting how improbable it was that Viralva would betray himself, he sunk into a state of despondency.

Altidore satisfied that he had acted with prudence, dismissed all fear. The

looks of Lorenzo indicated disappointment.

"I have crushed," said he, "some high cherished hope, destroyed some favourite scheme. Did he think to deceive me? Nature refused to aid the artifice, and made an ingenuous confession; that glowing red bespoke the truth. Tired of restraint, he has formed some plan to effect his enlargement—sued for the assistance of some officious being who readily promises what it shall be my care to leave unperformed. Spite of my efforts, each wish disappointed leaves me at continual war with myself; I have exchanged all peace—bartered my happiness for an unsubstantial good; in the pursuit of a phantom, real benefit has escaped me. Invested with power, surrounded by slaves, in possession of wealth, I yet am filled with discontent. When only Senor di

Viralva, ambition gave to a title an unfelt charm; I panted for its attainment—death placed it within my reach—I silenced conscience, which reminded me the lawful heir existed; Lorenzo, my prisoner, could not contend for his rights. Love next assumed the dominion of my breast; conquered, the conqueror sued. Bartolo's haughty daughter refused my offer; compelled to brook this insult, it rankled here, and with the weed of malice filled my heart; wounded pride gave it nurture, and as it stronger grew, deprived me of all peace. Ernesto Almerini, weak, passionless, became my rival; this roused my vengeance, and as my wishes increased, so did also my cares. How peaceful he sleeps whose unclosed door conceals not the treasure that tempts the plunderer! Caution was now necessary; I had resort to an accomplice, and then resigned liberty. Outwardly the master, in secret I was

the slave. Gold may obtain assistants, but cannot command fidelity, and he who serves you for his price, to the next bidder acts the same—he who to feed pride, leagues with a hireling, purchases the bane of his own happiness. How degrading, how insupportable to hear the taunts of those who abuse the power you place in them! Rosalia, source of my abasement! sole directress of my fate! to obtain your hand, spite of all scorn, I would venture even exposure. But why do I deliberate? Once the wife of Ernesto, I am undone! my anxiety is useless, and each fairy scheme the creature of my imagination."

By that strange fatality attendant on guilt, Altidore bent his thoughtful steps towards the chapel belonging to the castello.

With light tread he paced the gloomy

aisle, looked at each sculptured image, or paused in silent contemplation.

He descended to the vaults. In this repository for the dead, the first object that met his eye was the tomb of his brother.

A sigh, unbidden, escaped him, perhaps as he reflected on the injury he was doing his hapless orphan.

He next viewed that of the marchesa, and as he called to mind her many virtues, drew a comparison the most humiliating.

The saddest melancholy stole over his whole frame, and affected even to tears, he surveyed the tomb of his parents.

This was a moment he had seldom felt; the passions subdued, left him un-

supported. He reflected on the pursuit of man, his transient enjoyment, and his more lasting pain. The latter he had sadly experienced, and the pang of consciousness added to his compunction.

"Had my aim been laudable," said he, mentally, "what trials I had been spared, while hope and fear alternately agitated me! I was a stranger to that peaceful ease enjoyed by the duca. How ineffectual have been my efforts to disturb his serenity! His son, protected from my power, still gladdens with his presence a doating father, lives in his smiles, and, oh! more enviable felicity, shares those of Rosalia's. She mocked my efforts, turned my schemes into confusion, and calls that moment happy which shall give to Ernesto her willing hand. The insolent Di Bartolo, who, to aid my suit, refused to use parental

influence; him too, must I behold happy—hear him bless the day that robbed him of his child, because he knew how to value Rosalia's return.—Maddening reverse! For misery, pleasure—for anguish, blessings—and I their author. How ineffectual those struggles I have so long maintained! One more trial, and if not successful, Viralva yields; 'tis madness to contend with fate."

Chilled by the damp air of the vaults, he was seized with an universal trembling, and hurried back.

His pale and altered countenance alarmed Theodore, who had been in quest of him. "Senor Marchese," said he, "how strange you look! Has any thing unpleasant happened?"

Aware by the remark of Theodore

that the indisposition he felt was too visible to be denied, he merely said he was unwell, but assured him his fears were without foundation.

It was his wish to remove the suspicions of Theodore, conscious that his was not the honest zeal of a faithful servant; he nevertheless was compelled to accept it as such, convinced that if his emissary thought his usurped power on the decline, he would be the first to take advantage. Can we wonder if the slave, who receives his freedom as the price of some treacherous act performed, should on the first occasion forsake us?

Theodore brought him good news; the last trial, as he termed it, bid fair to succeed beyond his utmost wishes.

He felt no longer ill; joy animated him, and conveyed that false pleasure

which deludes for awhile the infatuated being by whom it is cherished.

"How did your comrades behave?"

"Worthy their employer," replied Theodore; "the cause they were engaged in, inspired them with ardour."

"If they succeed," said Viralva; "but I will not promise. Never were my hopes so sanguine; the sly negociator, too confident, as I thought, of his powers, promised me the accomplishment of my wishes. If he has predicted right, he may command me; I am eternally his."

Viralva felt rapture indescribable; former disappointment receded as cloud before a meridian sun.

Dismissed, Theodore departed to act

the petty tyrant, and retaliated on those subject to his power, the ills himself had received.

Oppression hardens rather than softens the human heart, and the weak mind, deaf to all but a sense of its wrongs, derives satisfaction when persecuting another. It is a system of self-justification that they would think themselves culpable not to adopt.

Expectation gives length to every hour, at least so thought Viralva, as he began to count those that must necessarily intervene before Rosalia, in his power, would in vain hope to find a friend. He anticipated the mortification of Ernesto—his rage, grief, and despair, when he should behold the long-contested prize snatched from him. "The day appointed for his wedding shall be converted into sorrow—his time passed

in vain pursuit shall prove a contrast to the bliss he fondly promised himself; tormented by uncertainty, I shall hear him deplore his fate, and sue for my advice.—Joy unspeakable! Can I restrain my triumph? Yes, I must; while from his plaint I retire to Rosalia—hear her reproaches, attempt to sooth her, or scoff at the silly menace. She calls on her father, implores his assistance—I smile at the sound; conviction flashes on her mind, and submissive she yields. What a change! I will enjoy it."

CHAP. XXVII.

To the lovers of harmony, never offered a more glorious opportunity of observing the benignant effects of peace than the present. The duca, like a calm serene sky divested of every cloud, invited all Nature to partake of his happiness.

The Senor di Bartolo, on whose venerable face the smile of gladness might be seen, continually reminded the spectator from whence his rapture flowed, by constant and incessant looks of affec-

tion bestowed on his Rosalia; and if this was fond partiality, he had the example of Don Rameraz to countenance him.

Happy privilege! How few can imitate thee, virtuous Rameraz! The present emotion of thy breast may be imputed to a selfish principle, for it is at your own joy you rejoice! But who, step by step, can follow you through the course of a well-spent life—join in your sorrow when misfortune pleads with you—extend that liberal relief which seeks not in ostentation or profuse thanks, its reward? Who can keep pace with your retiring steps, when self-gratified by the act, you quickly recede, nor tinge the cheek of poverty with the blush of shame? Oh! few indeed, for it is harder to withstand praise than to merit it.

Ernesto, as the unrestrained gale,

knew not confinement, and when reason prepared the shackle, gay pleasure repelled the attack. Could he be otherwise than joyous when Rosalia, the idolized object of his love, was present?

Laurentini caught the delightful contagion, and was more than cheerful. The sensation of her lovely bosom may be compared to the calm that succeeds the storm; sweetly tranquil, its gentle heaving denoted inward serenity—the mild lustre of her eyes shone undiminished. The felicity of the Senor and Senora Isidor afforded her the amplest satisfaction; she sighed to think it had been so long deferred. In Albina she saw the fatal effects of a single error, and in Isidor she beheld the victorious struggle of a great mind combating with a sense of shame. His susceptible bosom, wounded by consciousness, had to stifle the pang of reflection—meanly devoted

himself to a life of obscurity; but for Montaldi he had quitted the world, deceived into a belief that it was only from gaiety he flew.

"Montaldi," said she, with her usual pathos, "unfortunate yourself, the welfare of another is not forgotten by that heart, unmindful of its own; and yet he is not insensible.—Montaldi insensible! what an idea! Can I forget that sweetly painful moment when from his manly eyes, I saw the humid tear, heard his faltering tongue attempt to speak; benevolence the theme, Montaldi became affected—he could not proceed; the impression once made, my heart acknowledged it. Indelibly affixed, it required no more, but had it, the simple panegyric of Pauliana had completed the work; she spoke of Montaldi, his worth, his sufferings, and closed the interesting subject with an appeal to the

feelings, so powerful that it could not be resisted. By strong attraction held, I listened, and but for the cause had wished not to depart. I heard his adieu, and, oh! undefinable sensation! hoped it might not prove a lasting one; but it was merit alone that gave rise to the wish; the senor was unhappy—I pited him, and longed to become acquainted with his grief."

Ernesto felt a similar inclination; mystery increased the desire, but impenetrable secresy defeated his every endeavour, and as his Laurentini, he remained ungratified.

Portiri and Almerini, as soon as they found themselves alone, renewed the conversation of the stranger, and by the repetition, felt themselves more disposed to redress the grievances he complained of.

"Who could those men be," said Portiri, "whom he called his merciless pursuers? Their dress and actions excited my surprise."

"And no very extraordinary emotion," returned Ernesto. "Perhaps they were robbers; but when I am inclined to think so, the enshrouded figure perplexes me."

"He almost resembled a skeleton," replied Portiri, "and had he not spoke, my opinion would have been decided—however we shall soon know."

Ernesto wished the period already arrived, so eager was he to unravel the mystery. "Those appearances," said he, mentally, "that have so often terrified me, "are accounted for, while I, impelled by fear, withheld the means of serving an unfortunate being. No more

the slave of terror this arm shall pay the debt it owes. Fly swift, ye hours, and let me perform the work so long delayed."

Portiri, who observed his anxiety, said every thing to counteract its visible effects. "You will excite notice; secresy will not save you, should they watch us."

The justness of this remark could not be contradicted, and Ernesto promised to profit by the hint; but so bad did he acquit himself, that when retiring to his chamber, Alonzo sought an opportunity of following him.

"My dear friend," said he, "the expression of your looks to-day have awakened in my bosom sensations that I had hoped were for ever banished; some subject of more than common im-

port engrosses your thoughts. May Almanza, presuming on the friendship you honor him with, claim your confidence—claim the participation of all your joys and cares—or have I forfeited your good opinion?"

During all this time, Ernesto had not spoke a word; conscious that an answer was expected, he prepared to make one, calculated, as he thought, to dispel the suspicion he had unguardedly drawn on himself, but it was insufficient to satisfy real anxiety; it might have passed current with that artificial zeal, which, mistaken in its end, has only self-interest in view. Alonzo truly felt the anxiety he professed—nay, more, for there are feelings such as animate the bosom of friendship that cannot be described.

Ernesto, subdued with his characteristic ingenuousness, disclosed the

whole, and spoke of Portiri as his companion in the enterprize.

"I call not his valour in question," said Alonzo, "but you know not how numerous your opposers may be. Will you accept of my services?"

Amerini hesitated; "The company of Alonzo," said he, "is at all times agreeable, but——"

"But what? The stranger can have no objection," returned Almanza, anticipating the obstacles he would raise.

While disputing, they heard the signal of Portiri. He seemed mortified on beholding Almanza.

Fearing he would interrupt them, Ernesto undeceived him, but he appeared dissatisfied.

"He wishes," thought Ernesto, "no one to share our triumph. His vanity feels disappointed; but should danger menace us, he will be thankful for the addition."

Elated with the hope of success, they set out.

On entering the forest, Alonzo experienced a painful revival of past occurrences; an unaccountable dread took possession of him.

"We are betrayed," said he, addressing Ernesto. "My heart misgives me; I feel as on that fatal night when torn from my friends, I was doomed to languish within the prison of Caprana."

Almerini attempted to sooth him, accounting for his repugnance by the

solemnity of the hour, and the miseries recollection awakened.

Portiri, firm and intrepid, seemed to laugh his fears to nought. "There are three of us," said he.

While yet speaking, the object whom they expected, passed by, and regarding them with scrutiny, precipitately fled.

"It is he!—the same!" said Alonzo, pursuing him.

Ernesto and Portiri did the same; darkness and even danger itself was forgot. As a smooth lawn, they trod the entangling maze, nor stopped to pick their path.

The intervening boughs were hastily separated, but all their trouble proved for nought, and weary with fatigue, they

awaited the return of Alonzo, with whom they could not keep up. His exclamation had surprised them, and Ernesto was secretly deploring that incaution which had a second time betrayed him into danger. "Distracting thought! am I always to be the instrument of his misfortunes? But for me he had not ventured—to save me, he has fell the sacrifice. He seemed to know the stranger—perhaps the same who betrayed him; if so, I am wretched indeed."

With what pleasure did he behold Almanza return! Though pale and exhausted, with energy he clasped him to his bosom, motioned to return home, but could not speak.

Portiri, who was not occupied by such feelings, expressed a wish to know what passed with Alonzo and the stranger.

"You seemed to recognize his countenance," said he.

"I did," answered Almanza.

Portiri looked doubtingly, and remarked he had often been deceived by a transient look.

"I was not mistaken," replied Alonzo; "his features are deeply imprinted on my memory. He was the same who visited me so mysteriously on the night that preceded the escape of Nicolo."

Ernesto, like Portiri, was half persuaded that the impression made on Alonzo was only imaginary, for when alone, Portiri convinced him it was impossible to discern even the dress of the stranger, much less his face, in the hasty retreat he made.

"What motive could he have for acting so inconsistent?" said Ernesto.

"I'll tell you, and yet my conjectures may be wrong; he was prepared to meet but two, and our number being increased might have excited his alarm. The persecuted are suspicious; perhaps he feared deceit, and fled as soon as he discovered we were three: did you not remark the look of scrutiny with which he viewed us?"

Ernesto had observed the same, and readily believed the interpretation of Portiri.

"So then the unfortunate interference of Alonzo prevented our intentions, and may, for ought we know, doom a deserving being to irremediable misery."

Portiri sighed—he was of the same

opinion; this added to the regret of Almerini—it has been often said of him that he could not support disappointment, and rarely yielded a design once formed, till convinced of its impracticability. A thousand times he asked the advice of Portiri.

"Since you seem so determined," said he, "I would have you by all means gratify yourself, my services have been already volunteered, and to offer them again would be superfluous. But let us defer the elucidation a little while, till Alonzo, thinking we have given up the pursuit, will no more disturb us, and we shall be spared a refusal."

"In the meanwhile what will become of the stranger?" demanded Ernesto; "regardless of our promise, he will think we have forsaken him."

Portiri overruled his objections, and to appearance the subject was dropped.

Under the semblance of unconcern, Alonzo concealed his real sentiments; the sight of the stranger deeply affected him; he feared another interruption to his happiness, if, as he had thought, his deliverance was the act of Nicolo, might not this person (the same who had visited him in confinement) be the author of his misery. Acquainted with his emancipation, he might again confine him.

"But this idea is irrational," said he, "he knew not of my coming—it was my own officiousness."

Thus he sought to dispel fears, that unbidden rose; he trembled with apprehension, and the sight of Agatha overpowered him.

"To be robbed of thee, angelic innocence, is more than Alonzo can support! yet I have been banished from your presence—have existed unblest by your smiles; and all these ills endured from the malice of an unknown enemy: from him whom now—but I will not give utterance to the thought."

Ernesto, who witnessed his emotion, sincerely repented the communication he had made, and readily adopted the advice of Portiri.

"I shall investigate the affair no further," said he to Alonzo, "it may interfere with our approaching felicity."

This was intentionally spoken to direct the thoughts of Almanza to a different channel, and it produced the desired effect.

Much as he wished once more to behold the stranger, the inclination yielded to a more pleasing consideration, and when he beheld Ernesto calm and happy, he was persuaded, as he wished it to be, that the design was wholly given up.

Donna di Almanza, whose health and spirits, with the restoration of her son, had become re-established, now gladdened all present with her vivacity; and if her maternal feelings were capable of an increase, she might be said to find it in the prospect she had of Elvira's happiness.

The Senor Albert del Urbino was a young officer of distinguished bravery. He had signalized himself in the Spanish service, and at an age somewhat earlier than usual, received the trophies of well earned victory.

He had served in the same regiment with Don Rameraz, and profiting by his instructions, the undisciplined boy became the experienced warrior. Rameraz saw and exulted at the sight; for the dawning merit of Urbino promised the rich harvest, which was more than realized.

The calm blessings of peace had induced Albert to re-visit his native country; thither he came, not as some had supposed, without a heart, for though warm and glowing, it had withstood the united power of beauty and attraction.

A frequenter of foreign courts, he had been exposed to many temptations, but successful, escaped them all. "For thee, fair Elvira! was the conquest reserved. Albert, a suppliant, sues for your love—at your feet the vanquisher lies vanquished! Spare him whose noblest

achievements were clemency. She hears, she feels! Sweet sympathy that burthens the susceptible bosom with the woe of another, while at the same time it forgets its own.

Elvira, if not altogether consenting, bestowed that encouragement which bids a lover not absolutely to despair.

Urbino was a soldier, and was not dismayed by difficulties—he liked not easy access, for it lessened the victory.

Elvira sincerely loved him; her passion had stood the proof of years; and each laurel that adorned the brows of Albert, added a prouder triumph to her heart.

Donna di Almanza wished much to promote the union, and now that she saw her wishes near their completion, almost transported beyond reason.

"How peaceful I shall end life's closing scene," said she to Rameraa, "both my children happy; I shall be done with the world."

The good old don smiled.—"She speaks what she thinks," said he, mentally, "and I will not comment."

He admired the character of the donna, applauded her sentiments, and even overlooked her errors; for there was something amiable in them.

Urbino, who was a great favourite with Alonzo, possessed the magic power of obliterating from his remembrance all unpleasant reflections, and Portiri, no longer afraid of his interruption, renewed the subject to Ernesto whenever opportunity offered, nor dismissed it till compliance was promised. He ridiculed the opinion of Alonzo, laughed at his

terror, and inspired Almerini with so much confidence that he wondered he had hesitated a moment.

" It is mere weak superstition," said Portiri, " a superstition that I should despise myself, did I suffer it to influence me."

Ernesto felt the rebuke, and secretly thought it merited.

" For I acted," said he, " like a coward."

CHAP. XXVIII.

Now chimed the castello clock, the hour of one; it was like the solemn knell of death. Theodore, the guilty Theodore sat appalled.

"I wish it was time," said he to himself, "I like not this watching."

He stirred the fire, and replenished his glass; he rallied his spirits, which for awhile supported him. He heard a knock—"it is too soon for his return," said he.

Hearing a repetition, with increased violence he hurried to the secret communication, and beheld Viralva pale, disordered, and every feature distorted with rage.

" Why so soon, Senor Marchese ?" said Theodore.

" Confusion ! madness !" replied Altidore, " I am again disappointed. But it is my fate ! no more infatuated, I will yield. Is this the success I was promised ? Fury ! desperation ! I cannot brook such mockery."

Theodore, all astonishment, could not account for the rage of Viralva, which vented itself in unmeaning and unconnected words.

" Once more," said he, " that medmon has circumvented me—his

cursed interference brings all my schemes to nought. For what am I buoyed up with hope, without it is to make my mortification the greater? So secure as he assured me, and indeed I thought so myself."

"Do not despair, Senor Marchese, another time will suit as well."

"Too often have I been told so, but no matter, I shall wait till it is too late; then I may in vain contend with fate. Rosalia once the wife of Ernesto, will defy all my endeavours. Oh! wretched state, augmented by suspense—sure I am punished, severe indeed."

Nicolo and Manfredoni in vain expected Lorenzo, and when he came not, rightly concluded he was prevented by Viralva.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, the friends consulted with each other how they should counteract the malignancy of Viralva.

" Perhaps," said Nicolo, " the incaution of Lorenzo has betrayed our design, if so, it will be impossible to cope with the subtilty he is possessed of."

" But there are laws," replied Manfredoni, " that the tyrant dare not trample on; he shall be made to respect the power he contemns; and against his will do the injured justice."

" Much I fear," said Nicolo, " for the success of our undertaking; we are unassisted, and Viralva powerful! Our charge refuted, the obloquy may be thrown on us, and we considered the authors of a false accusation."

Manfredoni paused, the ideas of Nicolo savoured too much of probability to be rejected, and they had due weight with him; he wished they might prove erroneous, but the dependance was precarious. He knew that too often the voice of the oppressed is raised ineffectually against the great; for how rare is to be found the disinterested champion; and those who accuse an obscure villain, suppress the censure, better bestowed on the wealthy delinquent; the inexcusable offender, for as poverty urged him not to the commission of crimes, he cannot plead the same in extenuation of his offence.

Lorenzo, in a state of the most dreadful suspense, could only deplore the opportunity he had lost.

"What must my friends think?—Think that I am indifferent, or passively

submissive to my lot. But they are not unacquainted with the capriciousness of Viralva; they know the cruelty he delights to inflict. Cautious as he is, he had near defeated his own purpose. Whose step is that I hear? would it were Manfredoni's."

Vain wish! it was Viralva. Unhappy himself, he wished to make another equally so.

"To see his distress will afford me consolation, and as I view each ruffled feature, my own sorrow will become lessened. Those eyes, whose scornful glance has often looked the defiance at which I scoffed, now fixed in despair, shall in vain placate the vengeance I will unpitying hurl."

The aspect of the unfortunate Lorenzo was truly such as Altidore in his

utmost spleen could have wished. The unexpected impediment that had arose to crush his high raised hopes, completely shook his fortitude.

Viralva, with sly insinuation sought to learn his sentiments, and directed his questions with so much address, that might have deceived the most wary.—He wished to know the cause of that alteration which afforded him the most unbounded pleasure. He strongly suspected that Lorenzo had interested some person in his behalf—but whom could it be? He thought of a removal.

"After to night," said he, "I will become secure. Conveyed to a place of safety, the friends of Lorenzo (if such he has) in vain will seek him.—Procrastination may be dangerous; but I must brave it! For this eventful

night either crowns with success, or blasts for ever my hopes. If I am baffled, no more I'll trust—it is a bold attempt, but I will venture; not danger, not an armed host shall prevent me. It is for Rosalia I defy all peril—yes, disdainful fair! by those transcendant charms I swear, that no power on earth shall intimidate me. The plan is well formed, and alone worthy of him who devised it. Yet I doubted his sincerity, feared he had leagued with my enemies, and basely betrayed me. Suspicion, thou fiend! sure of hell born; thou bearest with thee, that never-ceasing torment, which allows its victim no interval of rest. By anguish pained, by sorrow goaded, the lacerated bosom finds alleviation in the soothing of friendship, the sweet alloy infuses balm, till your insinuations adds the gall of black suspicion, partakes of your nature, and infects with foul contagion

the mind diseased. Each word had a latent meaning, by design dictated, 'twas spoken for our ruin. Oh! dreadful state! oh! miserable fate! the slave of such a tyrant; I will shake off the galling yoke, and confide; it is bliss to trust —agony to doubt."

Like cowards who laugh at their nightly fears when the morning's light prove they were erroneous, so Almanza, meeting with no interruption, derided the danger he had apprehended; he feared a second betrayal, and the mysterious stranger seemed well to encourage the idea. He sighed for the hour that should put him in the possession of Agatha.

"When once mine," said he, "what force shall wrest her from me?"

At a loss to account for the impassioned energy with which he addressed

her, the Senora Rameraz could only ascribe it to the ardour of that passion which afforded her the highest satisfaction.

The happy countenances with which Laurentini was surrounded, imparted to her the most refined pleasure—a pleasure that totally excluded self; and when she heard the language of love, though her's was unblessed, she shrunk not from the sound. The mind of Laurentini was not tinctured with discontent; the soft melancholy which she indulged, so far from banishing her taste for gaiety, even rendered it agreeable. The odium that had been removed from the character of Montaldi freed her bosom from solicitude, dispelled its tender anxieties; Ernesto had acquitted him, and she was happy.

"At such a time as this," said she, "shall I complain? Look at my father,

my uncle, my brother, my cousin, and Agatha, inestimable friend! then ask my heart what it has to require more—sure nothing."

Almanza, who was walking beneath, caught her eye; she smiled.

"Dear friend, have I forgotten thee? While memory is retentive to your many virtues, can I prove unmindful of your happiness? Never! you are deserving of an ample portion; may you enjoy it."

She was yet speaking when Elvira entered her apartment.

"And have I at last discovered," said she, "the secret of my reserved friend?"

Laurentini smiled; the rising blush

which had not yet faded from her cheek, seemed to verify the suspicions of Elvira, for when she beheld the emotion of Laurentini, she mistook her energy for that which love inspires.

"Some object," she remarked, "seems strangely to attract you at that window; allow me to share your amusement."

"Undoubtedly," replied Laurentini; "but take care of your heart, and if you do not feel as I do, I will call you an insensible creature, for it is, I assure you, the very person I was addressing when agreeably surprised by a visit from you."

Elvira, with no small portion of curiosity, took advantage of the permission she had received, and lest Laurentini should recant, hurried to the window.

"Provoking creature!" she exclaimed; "I can see nobody but Alonzo, amusing himself with walking as fast as if some one was pursuing him."

"And what more can you wish for?"

"A vast deal; imagination had pictured some formidable hero, one sufficiently attracting to inspire the cold bosom of my Laurentini with a passion, as fervent as that which seemingly dictated the words I listened to with delight."

"Then you were deceived?"

"Yes, when I beheld only Alonzo."

"Incorrigible, upon my word; so, to please your caprice, I must perforce fall in love, and then I suppose, by magic, present my swain to your view, to see

whether you approve of him or no; that is too much; never expect I shall gratify such extravagant ideas. Elvira, you presume on the friendship I feel for you—a friendship that will animate the bosom of your Laurentini so long as it is capable of rightly appreciating the virtues of her friend."

"Oh, dear, what reply shall I make? a very laconic one—you are a charming flatterer."

"And you affect insensibility, but preserve that pretty unconsciousness, Elvira, it is very recommendatory; and when the victorious youth lays at your feet the hard earned laurels, for which he has exposed his valuable life, with sweet simplicity ask, 'What are these for?'—'To gain your favour,' he replies, in insinuating accent. Each word has power, and Elvira completely

vanquished, 'Oh, dear, what more shall I say? Something very laconic—Albert is successful!'"

"Do you expect," returned Elvira, "I shall suffer this insult to pass unnoticed? Believe me, I will retaliate."

"But whom can you select, unless you supply me with another Albert? However, that is impossible, for I know Elvira thinks there is not his equal."

"You boast of knowledge that you do not possess."

"Ah, I am always erring, but as that is a human failing, I have put it in your power to exercise a divine attribute."

Ernesto, all transport, forgot every engagement, save the one he so ardently

longed to fulfil; but this forgetfulness the Senor Portiri was determined he should not long enjoy; the scene at the forest he endeavoured to revive, and once more Almerini resolved to penetrate, if possible, that mystery.

"It shall be deferred no longer," said he, "by obstacles of my raising."

"I believe we are both equally as culpable," replied Portiri; "but the fault is venial, for who would refuse the call of pleasure to obey that of misery! I had said."

"I hope," returned Ernesto, with enthusiasm, "our hearts answers faithfully to that question, when, pursuant to their dictates, we acknowledge ourselves ready to assist the unfortunate."

"Well spoken," returned Portiri;

"it soothes my conscience, which I assure you accused me with cruelty; I had raised hopes which I proved unmindful of realizing. It is true we kept faithfully our first appointment, and the stranger by flight, prevented our intentions, but for his conduct I can pretty well account—we prepared him to expect two, yet he beheld three."

"I am very sorry for that circumstance," returned Ernesto, "for I dare say its consequence was what you describe; we will, however, make all the reparation in our power."

"Agreed," said Portiri; and they parted.

Manfredoni, unhappy at not hearing from Lorenzo, disclosed his fears to Nicolo.

"How shall we satisfy ourselves," he demanded, "by boldly accusing Viralva?"

"And is such a declaration made by the temperate Manfredoni—he who called the glow I felt, rash impetuosity; conduct ill fitted to promote the cause I had espoused? Be not offended if I offer the same salutary advice—act with caution, for what violence counteracts, prudence will facilitate."

"I feel reproved and am corrected, Nicolo, but you will excuse my warmth, and allow for my feelings if they betray me into an impropriety. When I behold him whom I love with parental affection, thus basely treated, and were I not moved by his unmerited sufferings, I should despise myself. Let us, my friend, to the forest, the air will refresh us, and perhaps we may see the monster."

CHAP. XXIX.

PORTIRI, who was all expectation, entered the chamber of Ernesto, and acquainted him he was in readiness.

"So am I," replied Almerini; but his feelings did not accord with his words, for though he would not acknowledge it, his courage failed him; but as he was not proof against the raillery of Portiri he acquiesced, and with affected spirits, joined him.

Never had the forest appeared to Ernesto so gloomy, so dismal, so dreary;

filled with secret horror, he scarcely ventured to breathe; the hoarse wind sullenly swept along, and in sad murmurs crept through the trees, making a whistling noise, at once discordant and disagreeable; not a star was visible, and the moon inveiled by thick clouds had withdrawn her rays.

Portiri unappalled, encouraged him to proceed; Ernesto silently obeyed, nor confessed his fears.

Animated by the sight of the same mysterious figure, he willingly accepted his invitation, and followed him for some time almost mechanically.

"Be not dismayed," said the stranger, "though enveloped in mystery I am not designing."

The voice was counterfeited, and

Ernesto easily distinguished it was not the same speaker who had first awakened an interest in his bosom; he examined his dress—that was the same, the broken sword and each extravagant gesture were similar. Perhaps he had been deceived.

He retreated a few paces and asked the opinion of Portiri; he was convinced beyond a doubt—could vouch to the stranger's identity.

This was sufficient, he required no more, and fearless followed. Undismayed he beheld several men approach them.

"These are my friends," said the stranger; "be not afraid."

Ernesto looked at Portiri, and saw satisfaction on his countenance, the

sight enlivened him; and now by the strong light of the torches he endeavoured to steal a look at his conductor, but either by accident or design he artfully prevented him.

Within hearing the stranger accosted the men, and looking at Almerini, said, "Seize him!"

They immediately proceeded to fulfil his command.

"Portiri, my friend!" said Ernesto; "we will sell our lives dear, and prove to these myrmidons, if credulous, we are courageous."

But, great God! what were his sensations! what his emotions in this hour of distress, to find he had been basely betrayed by the treacherous Portiri. He was the accomplice of a villain yet

more abandoned; and so far from assisting, delivered the deceived Ernesto into the power of his enemy.

Rage, astonishment, and every outraged feeling conspired to unnerve his arm, so that, overpowered by numbers, he had nearly fell the sacrifice of villainy, had not two unknown friends stepped forward in his defence, and snatched him from a fate far more terrible than death—ignominious captivity.

"Receive, base wretch, the just reward of your crimes," said one of the men, making a furious aim at the disguised figure.

He was wounded severely, and Nicolo (for it was him) with triumph, exposed to the scorn, contempt, and detestation of Ernesto, the person of Altidore di Viralva.

Turning to his companion, who proved to be Angelo Manfredoni, he exclaimed, "My aim is accomplished—past injuries are forgotten in this moment. Viralva, I glory in your disgrace; I hail your agonies, for in them I revenge my own.—Portiri, pitiful coward! the contempt I feel for your disgraceful conduct places you beneath my resentment; profit, if it is yet in your power, by the just degradation of your confederate—console him, if possible for his disappointment."

The situation of Viralva called forth the exertion of his adherents, and stimulated by Portiri, who feared the publishing of the nefarious transaction, they attempted to secure Nicolo, Manfredoni, and Ernesto.

A warm attack commenced, during
ugh inadvertence, Portiri

met an ignominious and untimely death by the hand of a vassal, who, in the general confusion, mistook him for Nicolo. Ghastly wounds disfigured his once elegant form, and like a common bravo, whose character he had assumed, he unhonoured laid. Nicolo, moved, contemplated the sad spectacle; he considered the end of him who had been the author of all his woes, reflected on his fate, and averting his eyes, exclaimed, "He lived inglorious, and died the same."

Dismayed, the vassals bore away the wounded insensible Viralva; prevention was impossible, and Manfredoni submitted.

Turning to Almerini, he congratulated him on his escape.

"Rather," returned Ernesto, address-

ing the friends, " my thanks are due to you, by whose interposition my life was preserved."

They bowed, and proffering their assistance, accompanied the young marchese to the pallazzo, promising to pay him an early visit, having matters of importance to communicate.

They bid him good night, and retired, leaving Ernesto not more delighted at his escape, than curious to know the nature of the subject. Late as the hour was, he could not refrain from speaking to Almanza, and for that purpose, entered his chamber.

Alonzo, awaked out of his sleep, surveyed with a mixture of terror and amazement, his deranged looks, and disordered dress, which not till then did he recolle[illegible]

Had Alonzo been dreaming of a spectre, his appearance had well answered the idea, but as that was not the case, Almanza, half raising himself up, could only yield to surprise.

"What is the matter?" said he, with quickness, for quite awake, he began to fear some dreadful catastrophe had happened.

Almerini related every distressing particular, and but for the uniformity that marked the whole, had still believed he was dreaming.

"But you assured me," said he, in a tone of reproach, "that you had given up all idea of investigation."

"Yes," replied Ernesto; "but it was by the advice of Portiri that I told you so. Unsuspicious of his meaning,

I believed him sincere—believed him my friend, till fatally convinced to the contrary. Too well can I now account for his repugnance to let you accompany us; he feared your power, he knew your zeal, my friend. It was to your solicitude I owed the preservation of my life; and when he apparently in conversation with us, exclaimed, 'There are three of us,' it was to warn the villain with whom he was in league, of his danger. Pursuant to the hint, he fled, and the wily Portiri, when alone with me, insinuated it was on your account the discovery I expected was withheld.—False dissembler! his deception succeeded, and I the dupe, had——"

"Oh! spare the conclusion," said Alonzo, interrupting him.

They then separated, and in the morning, what a discovery was made!

It involved the perfidious Viralva in disgrace and infamy; his crimes were made public, and exposed him to the deserved abhorrence of the virtuous. Detected were those base acts he had vainly hoped to conceal. The strange appearances in the forest were by his instigation to terrify Almerini, who, being preferred to him by Rosalia, became the object of his aversion, and subject to all that malignancy could invent. He was the author of her flight and sufferings; snatched from his power by the followers of Orsino, she was nevertheless exposed to all the horrors of captivity, and with such companions too.—Dreadful fate, reverted by the magnanimity of Montaldi? Orsino, moved by his struggle, released the object of his solicitude, and made him her happy escort.

Safe beneath her paternal dwelling, Viralva saw the beauteous Rosalia, and

cursed the hand that had performed the act. Disappointed, but not reformed, again he planned mischief, but changed his object; to Ernesto alone his vengeance was confined. Well acquainted with his disposition and enthusiasm, he resolved to make them subservient to his wishes.

Hence those mysteries that so deeply interested Almerini; he longed to penetrate them, and by his eloquence, persuaded the Marquis Almanza to accompany him.

The aim of Viralva was not merely to terrify Ernesto; he wished to instill into his mind the poison of jealousy. Hence the well couched responses of the mysterious informant.

Alonzo and Ernesto were both lovers, and the same language suited each.

Happily for the destined victim of Viralva, the former considered the hint intended for himself, and was the more confirmed when the vile emissary, through a mistake, touched him on the shoulder, exclaiming as he quickly passed on, "You should come unattended, senor."

Jealousy, the very bane of happiness, now took possession of the bosom of Almanza; every word he magnified, till they gained importance that at once destroyed his peace, for now he doubted the constancy of Agatha, feared she intended to retaliate, and imputed the information to the contrivance of Ernesto, who, to spare his feelings, had devised this method.

"For this," said he, mentally, "the strong entreaty he used, it was not mere caprice, but a more powerful motive."

Under this impression, he withstood all the persuasions of Ernesto, ascribing them to finesse. Full bent on going, he fell into the snare prepared for Almerini.

And now may be accounted for the surprise of Viralva on his visit of feigned condolence. Struck with astonishment at beholding Ernesto, whom he had supposed safe at the habitation of Caprana, he started. "Here is some mistake," thought he, "or the villains have deceived me." And now it was that he experienced the saddest reverse that could ever crush the schemes of the abandoned.

With confusion he retired, inveighing against fate, and tormented by the pangs he had hoped to inflict on others.

With the utmost speed he reached the abode of Caprana, and with counter-

feited courtesy acquainted him with the purport of his visit.

Here he was compelled to dissemble, for though he felt the rage of disappointment boiling in his veins he dared not give it vent. It is only to the weak and powerless that the wicked exercise their tyranny.

Caprana, confounded by the application, informed him his men had brought some person prisoner, but whether right or wrong he could not pretend to say.

"I cannot think who it can be," replied Viralva, "but convinced I am beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Almerini is now at the pallazzo."

Conviction at length flashed on his mind, it must be Alonzo. Fearful his conjecture might prove erroneous, and

not wishing to expose himself to whoever it might be, he thought of an expedient less dangerous, and at midnight entered the chamber of Alonzo.

His step, though light and cautious, awaked Almanza, and stealing a glance at the intruder, feigned sleep.

Viralva advanced, and surveying the countenance of Alonzo, gave him the same advantage.

Convinced of his mistake, with an exclamation descriptive of his feelings, he freed Almanza from the terror his presence had excited.

In the morning he acquainted Caprana of the occurrence.

Caprana affected to discredit it, and treated the relation with ridicule.

Alonzo provoked, but not convinced, still persisted in his opinion, and felt not very pleasant on the occasion.

In the course of the day, the strange and unusual gaiety of Nicolo astonished him; but that astonishment felt an increase when the senor made an appointment to meet him at twelve. "For what purpose," thought he, "has he promised compliance?"

With indescribable pleasure he heard the hour of twelve, and hastened to the chamber of Nicolo. He was not there.

Alonzo awaited the prescribed time with the utmost impatience, but he came not.

Nicolo had a motive for the restriction which it is now time to explain. Sullen, gloomy, and his whole soul sunk

in despair, no ray of light afforded him a gleam of hope, till a reverse as strange as it was unexpected, took place.

When Nicolo was supposed to be safe in his chamber, the arrival of a stranger disturbed the melancholy reverie in which he was indulging; but what a revolution took place when he discovered Altidore di Viralva.

The emotions that agitated him, subsided, he obeyed the dictates of prudence, and cautiously placed himself in a situation where he could hear whatever passed.

"Should I unluckily be discovered," thought he, "my punishment cannot exceed that which I now endure." But his apprehensions were groundless; too much engrossed to think of him, he escaped detection.

Caprana was commissioned to release Alonzo, whom it was not his wish to detain; and this was to be effected in the dead of the night.

With a smile of self-complacency, Nicolo heard their plan, and converted it into his own good. "Viralva," said he, "the cause of my disgrace, you shall perforce be instrumental to my deliverance."

Pleasure had nearly betrayed him, but restraining his rapture, he addressed Almanza as has been described.

His scheme succeeding, he once more enjoyed liberty; and as he received the refreshing breeze, his heart accused him, and by sympathy he felt the disappointment of Alonzo. Not that Nicolo was before insensible or unmindful of the anguish he suffered by his

cruel captivity, but assured that Caprana, for his own sake, would keep his escape secret from Viralva, he considered the liberation of Almanza as a matter of course.

CHAP. XXX.

Consoled by the idea that he was only prolonging, but not preventing the deliverance of Alonzo, Nicolo could now fully appreciate the blessing he was put in the unexpected possession of.

As he had predicted, Alonzo soon after made his appearance at the pallazzo, but could not account by what means, or by whom his freedom had been granted.

Viralva, not to be pacified, thought of

another scheme whereby Rosalia would be placed in his power. On the night of her meeting with Montaldi, by his orders she was conveyed to the cottage already described.

In this forlorn situation, excluded from every ray of hope, she had completely gratified the malignancy of Viralva but for the death of Josepha.

Thus did this fresh disappointment convince him of the inefficacy of his profligate plans. One continual scene of mortification and vexation marked those days that had they been spent in virtue, might have reflected honor instead of disgrace.

Death to his hopes, Rosalia once more graced the domestic scene; and as the blight that blasts the blossoms

of expectation, he saw each obstacle removed, and with dreadful suspense awaited the day that should place beyond the power of his prevention, the happiness of Rosalia and Ernesto. What was to be done? One last resource suggested itself; Portiri, who had insinuated himself into the good opinion of Alonzo, was also his friend, and to serve him, left untried no means whereby he could gain the favour of Almerini.

This was easily obtained, and the abandoned Portiri unblushing abused the confidence reposed in him.

To forward his foul intent, he purposely mistook the way, in order that they might pass through the forest, where they would encounter mysteries that he trusted Ernesto would not rest till he had explored.

The interruption of Alonzo was what he had not been prepared to expect; it therefore took him unawares, and thrown off his guard, he had almost betrayed himself.

His disapprobation Ernesto wrongly imputed to vanity, but it was not such; it was that chagrin which ever attends the defeat of guilt. He knew not how to extricate himself; he had not time to apprize his perfidious associate of the alteration that had taken place.

With assumed composure, he accompanied Ernesto and Alonzo; when he made use of the memorable words, "There are three of us," it was to warn Viralva (for it was him) of his danger. He accordingly fled, and Alonzo, by pursuing him, awakened the fears of Portiri.

Almost distracted for fear of the consequence, by feigning fatigue, he prevented Ernesto from following his example. He trembled for the result; Almanza seemed acquainted with the person of Altidore, by his exclamation of "It is he! the same!"

The man whose extravagant gestures first awakened the commiseration of Almerini was no other than Theodore, nor would Viralva have now ventured, as he was too well known to Ernesto; but considering him his devoted victim, he threw off all restraint, and influenced by that refinement on barbarity, which marked many of his actions, he wished to exult over the misery of Almerini! Hear his sighs, and mock his complaint! But fatally mistaken, he alone was the miserable object of pity.

Tormented and tortured by a variety

of contending emotions, he became the slave of his own bad passions. Sunk in despair, he refused all consolation, and had almost accused Portiri of treachery, till by the suggestion of another diabolical scheme, they became reconciled.

To prevent the further interference of Almanza, Portiri persuaded Almerini to pretend the utmost indifference whenever the mysterious affair was mentioned.

He followed his advice, and deceived by his unconcern, Alonzo.

Viralva, overjoyed at the intelligence, promised himself ample success; and it was agreed when the subject had in some measure died away, it should be revived by Portiri.

It was so, and that designing villain received as the reward of his treachery, the fate he so highly merited.

Viralva, severely wounded by the hand of Nicolo, had to ruminate at leisure on the downfall of all his stratagems.

To his bodily sufferings was added mental agony, and this was found in the reflection, that to the unfortunate Nicolo, whom he had consigned to disgrace and infamy, he owed his present exposure: that arm he had supposed defenceless had wrought his ruin, and overwhelmed him with confusion.

As feels the base tyrant, whose ingenuity has been racked to devise new methods of torture, when doomed to endure the excruciating pain he had designed for another, so felt Viralva. His

anguish was indescribable—his pangs acute indeed! It was now he discovered the inutility of riches, since they could not procure him one moment's peace. Alternately he cursed and raved, and those whose interest it was to attend him, were terrified from so doing, by that ungovernable rage which kept them at an awful distance.

So terminates the miserable career of vice! In this severe hour of distress Viralva wanted the social friend, the sympathetic bosom. Are such to be found among the base? Alas! no; his acquaintance, too licentious to approach a sick-bed, deserted him, and retired disgusted at a sight which reminded them of the fate their excesses daily promoted.

Fled were the parasites, and in their conduct Viralva saw his own reflected.

But this conviction wrought no reformation in him; incapable of acting, his thoughts were solely devoted to evil; and that continually.

The blow he had hoped to surmount proved a decisive one; and oh, distraction! the hand of Manfredoni aimed it. He boldly asserted the rights of Lorenzo di Viralva.

"Yes, traitor, your nephew, and the lawful marchese—resign, base wretch, your usurped power—relinquish those honours that reflected none on thee. Descend from those heights you have dared to ascend, your humiliation will be the greater. The enormity of your crimes exposes you to the punishment a lesser offence had escaped. Shall the titled villain who abuses power, assume the privilege of oppressing the humble? Forbid the thought, ye noble energies

of the soul. Ye thoughts intuitive, which tells the poor what is their due, reminds them they are not slaves, and prevents abject submission."

"There is no alternative for me," exclaimed Viralva, in an accent of despair. "Manfredoni imperiously demands justice. Should I, unmindful refuse his claim, a public disclosure will instantly be made, and I compelled, must perforce make restitution. I will make a merit of necessity, feign repentance, let fall the tears of contrition; they are but drops that pass away—what matters if I gain my end! For well I know the heart of Lorenzo—their magic power can subdue him, insinuate themselves into his very soul. When I appeal to his feelings, call myself his uncle, the brother of his father, he will forget the injuries I have done him, extend the mercy I refused. Foolish weakness it is

for the strong mind to scoff at thee; contemn the folly subservient to its wishes—and must I reverse characters; turn suppliant, and meanly sue? Yes, it is so! From Manfredoni's hand comes winged the arrow of fate. Is there no way to silence him? How lofty he speaks, and must I hear the discordant language? Oh! that this seat of thinking, called the brain, would leniently suspend the thoughts that distract me. Recollection is my torment; an hovering fiend, that close pursues me. Is there no avenue—no means of escape? Where shall I hide this diminished head? Robbed of its titles, it must seek shelter in the wild waste of obscurity; there undistinguished, and unnoticed, the once exalted Di Viralva must mingle with the promiscuous group—his only bliss the remaining unknown. If I can bear this, I am a stoic!

a being whom no change is capable of moving. What a vicissitude!"

Enanguished he groaned—"It is the voice of Nicolo—hark! what a lofty sound; Viralva must even hear it. How tormenting the exultation of an enemy! —Montebino, false, deceitful creature, your fatal charms converted the once friendly Nicolo into my deadly foe; but was it not merited? Avaunt compunction."

Nicolo and Manfredoni, accompanied by Lorenzo, entered his chamber; the latter he surveyed with a mingled emotion of shame and contrition. He advanced—the heart of Viralva palpitated—he wished the meeting over before it had begun. Manfredoni opened the subject—Viralva sighed; "Is this a moment for such a request, or must he

that has fallen submit to every indignity? Come on, fortune has paved the way; tread on these ruins! finish the work of devastation, and crush at once. Manfredoni, you are a soldier, whom mercy best becomes—quit not your sphere; with shame I own I once injured you; but the remembrance is blotted out of your memory, for you nobly forgave.

" Overwhelmed with confusion, Nicolo, dare I address you? I know not what to say. Methinks that were the scene of life passed with me, and my trembling soul awaiting its sentence, your wrongs would bar its passage, would stifle pity, and sink the guilty Viralva to the lowest abyss of misery."

" Lorenzo," said he, fixing his eyes on that unfortunate being, " suspend

your reproaches, spare my disgrace! Death will soon do the justice I denied, and the life of Viralva expiate his offence. Sully not the fair page of our ancestry: let not the tongue that speaks in praise of Viralva's virtues record the vice of Altidore, and draw a dreadful comparison between the brothers. Say, will you save me from degradation—prove by your clemency that you are the son of the Marchese di Viralva. Ask first your heart, consult its dictates; say to it, this man is not my uncle; Nature, it is true, has constituted him such, but his own bad passions has annulled this title. I will only consider him as he deserves, as a tyrant remorseless! As one who has consigned me to misery and anguish, a wretched prisoner, subject to his taunts, and bound by an oath not to complain. Fate has reversed the decree—I behold my tormentor sudued,

vanquished, inevitably ruined! And shall I not rejoice? Yes, I will triumph—exult at his downfall; it is the prerogative of virtue. It is but the reward of each outraged feeling—of those pangs that—"

"Forbear!" said Lorenzo, with strong emotion.

The picture so pathetically drawn, of his own humiliation, if really felt, had well entitled him to the pity he sued for. Had obtained the mercy he did not deserve; but the whole was fiction—that disguise in which his life had been spent.

Viralva, thoroughly acquainted with the human heart, appealed to the feelings, and addressed the passions.—Knowing how self-accusation operates on a generous mind, for while it spares

ourself, it rarely fails of gaining pardon. We deplore the fall of one ingenuous enough to confess his own errors, and though they are the subject of our animadversion, the erring escapes.

So argued Viralva, and successfully too.

Disarmed, Lorenzo said every thing that compassion could suggest to one, who conscious of his guilt, seemed to court punishment. His sensibility was affected, and had Manfredoni and Nicoli reproached him with weakness, he had heard them unmoved. But the case was not so, for they like him, duped by artifice, almost palliated the crimes of the mighty offender, and each forgetful of his own individual wrongs, attempted to exculpate the perfidious Viralva.

Ridiculing their folly, he made it his unfeeling sport—deceit and dissimulation alone influenced him. His chief object was to gain time. This obtained, he had only the resentment of the Almerini family to fear. But he knew they were noble, and this disgraced character shrunk not from the most abject concessions.

Such is the effects of vice, such the deserved obloquy it ever brings on itself. Had the aim of Viralva been virtue he had not been the slave of hirelings; compelled to satisfy their rapacious demands, and the victim of continual fear. Shame and disgrace had not followed the ill success of those schemes, which being laudable, had gained the sympathy of every individual. He had been spared the pang which consciousness inflicts; for as his contrition was feigned, his mind was clogged with

the weight which true repentance removes. Its salutary effects lessened not the mortification of disappointed vice—how severe that reproach which is self-inflicted.

CHAP. XXXI.

FREE from molestation, the inhabitants of the pallazzo enjoyed that peace which may be disturbed, but can never be banished from the bosom of virtue.

The atrocities of Viralva inspired but one sentiment, and that was pity. The treachery of Portiri beguiled them of a tear; it was for the depravity of human nature it flowed.

Unapprehensive of any furthur mischief Viralva might cause, the duca re-

lied on the interfering power of Providence.

"Heaven restrains the wicked, my dear children," said he, addressing Ernesto and Laurentini, "Viralva defeated, deserves no severer punishment. Ernesto is preserved to us, can we desire more?"

"It is mistaken lenity," said the Senor Bartolo, "that would let such a miscreant escape. He may not always prove unsuccessful, and the valuable life of the marchese will become the sacrifice of false pity."

"Weak system, founded on human wisdom," replied the duca, "so we should seek the life of Viralva, to place it out of his power of injuring us. Is not the Supreme our protector? Are we afraid to trust to him?"

The senor urged no further; his fears were silenced, and embracing his brother, said—" You make me every moment your debtor, what do I not owe to you? Virtue appears most attracting when it is found pleading for vice."

Alonzo, not more incensed than astonished, at the perfidy of Portiri, could only blush that he had called such a being—friend.

He shuddered when he reflected that his fatal introduction might have deprived of life the amiable Ernesto; but his emotion subsided as he called to mind, that he had proved its preservation.

" Had they dissuaded me from joining them, the abandoned Portiri would have proved successful."

The Senors Manfredoni and Nicolo partook of the pleasure they conferred, and owned themselves more than compensated by the thanks that were gratefully bestowed.

Almerini found much to admire in the intrepid Nicolo; his otherwise fiery spirit, softened by benevolence, rendered him an object truly interesting. The elegance of his manners could only equal, but not exceed that of his person.

No more the victim of despair, he paid sufficient attention to his external appearance to show that the desire of pleasing was not quite banished. The energy that stamped each feature with expression, proved a striking contrast to the deep rooted, yet pleasing melancholy of Manfredoni. Less ardent, but nally interested in the cause he had

espoused, it rather depressed than heightened his spirits.

Angelo had dwelt amid scenes where death, robbed of half its terrors, was considered as a tyrant whose frequent exactions must be complied with; he had beheld dear friends fall by his side, but as their end was glorious, he lamented it not; the consecrated tear bedewed their grave, but the feelings of the warrior stifled those sighs that had otherwise found vent.

Yet, when he graced the soft domestic scene, his expanded heart shared all the pains and pleasures of every human being.

A strict lover of justice, he suffered not oppression to triumph; though when sorrow afflicted the guilty he forgot their vice, mindful only of their

plaint; he spoke to all the one language which sympathy dictates.

There was something in the humiliation of Viralva that associated so many tender ideas, which nearly overpowered him, for they brought the late amiable marchese to his recollection. Gratitude softened the tumult raised by the wrongs of Almeria; and while contending passions struggled in his bosom, he had nearly fell a victim to his sensibility, till awakened remembrance brought Lorenzo, deserted and forsaken to his view.

He called himself insensible, ungrateful, and used every epithet, calculated to inspire the resolution he wanted.

It was an act of injustice to suffer Viralva to escape—it was not fulfilling his duty toward an injured orphan.

Thus did he seek for excuses to justify himself, and earnestly sought for the approval he most coveted—that bestowed by his own heart. He had yielded to the entreaties of Altidore, and leniently agreed to suspend the publicity of the affair, provided he kept his promise.

This was not his intention, if he could any how avoid it; but Altidore, resolute when he feared no interruption, yielded almost immediately at the approach of danger, and though avaricious to a degree, when his claim to possession became precarious, he could resign the contested treasure for a lesser consideration.

With Nicolo, or even Manfredoni he had little to hope; acquainted with his artifice, the contest was equal; but with Lorenzo, the inexperienced Lo-

renzo his arts were successfully practised.

He entreated his forgiveness in a voice calculated to soften a heart flowing with kindness; he confessed his guilt with so much humility, increasing rather than extenuating his faults; he spoke with so much apparent sincerity of the resignation he should shortly make, that would have softened the most inflexible; but to complete his success he talked of death as an event so near approaching, that would have disarmed even vengeance itself.

Seeing Lorenzo affected, he timely added, "If your forgiveness is as free, as I know it is, rejoice that your unfortunate uncle is so near terminating his mortal career; not more unhappy than guilty, his sufferings are highly merited."

The soothing he expected was not denied, for who could withhold it from a dying penitent; such an one as Lorenzo believed him to be?

His recovery was purposely prolonged, for this was a momentous crisis, in which his future welfare was concerned.

Among all the guests at the pallazzo, the only one who appeared serious was the Senor del Urbino; to Don Rameraz, whom he was accustomed to consider as a father, he imparted his inquietude.

The don listened with attention—heard with patience, the disjointed sentences dictated by timorous love.

"And what do you expect?" said he, with good humour, when Albert had concluded.

The youth hesitated.

After enjoying for awhile his confusion, Rameraz said, "I presume by making me your confident, my services are required."

Without directly answering in the affirmative, the looks of Albert nearly admitted the same.

"Well," he resumed, "I must consider the affair, and consult Donna de Almanza; but do you not think, senor, you are a little too premature?"

The eloquent entreaty that followed this question, determined Rameraz to sport no longer with the feelings of Urbino; his whole soul spoke, and lent persuasion to his faltering tongue.

t ardently did he love the amiable

Elvira; he had known her from her earliest infancy; she had shared his juvenile affection; and the tenderness they mutually felt when mere children, was now ripened into that passion which was at once his pride and happiness.

He had not to combat with an unrequited flame, for Elvira bestowed on the worth she admired, the reward it merited.

The sanction of her mother, and the approval of Alonzo, increased the love unblessed without their concurrence.

Rameraz, mindful of his promise, sought the earliest opportunity of conferring with the donna.

At first, somewhat averse to so hasty an union, she refused consent, till the

successful advocate of Urbino pled so pathetically in his behalf that she could not refuse.

Away flew the delighted don to communicate intelligence that recalled to his memory the days of his own youth; but this recollection was only revived by the eagerness he felt to impart what in those days had afforded him the height of human bliss; nor did he misjudge—Albert, full of rapture, the expressions he uttered were so unconnected, that betrayed, had it been necessary, the ardency of his passion. Pressing the extended hand of the don, he could not speak, and Rameraz considerately left him to enjoy the felicity which had felt lessened by his presence.

His first transport over, he sought Elvira, and on his knees beseeched her

to make him the happiest of men, by adding her own to the consent already pronounced by the donna.

Elvira blushed, hesitated, and felt that confusion which delicacy, struggling with love, generally occasions; the latter, however, proved successful, and Alonzo complimented Albert on this improvement of his looks.

"I have caught the contagion of you," he replied, with his usual vivacity.

Rosalia serenely happy, looked herself again; the terror Viralva had excited, became dissipated, and with the rest she rejoiced at the providential escape of Ernesto, who never was more dear to her then when she had entertained fears for his safety.

Donna de Isidor and the interesting Rhinaldo, to whom she owed her deliverance, received her unbounded gratitude.

With Isidor she would frequently talk of Montaldi, weep at his misfortunes, and wish him that happiness he so well deserved.

"What am I not indebted to him?" said Rhinaldo, with energy. "With justice he may lay claim to all the merit of my reformation. Unchecked by the reflections he gave rise to, I had pursued, unthinking, my guilty course. Powerless had been my contention with passions that left me only a partial conqueror; for, unsubdued, they taught me to despise vice, but not to practice virtue. Content with this negative change, the high burnish of self-com-

placency gave to mere tinsel, intrinsic value; till Montaldi, just, amiable, and discriminating, shewed me how widely removed from real virtue was that which sought security in seclusion. 'Redress the wrong you have done mankind,' said he. Can I forget his advice? Can I forget his eloquence? Impossible; while memory holds her seat I shall retain each noble sentiment dictated by a heart at universal peace with the whole universe. Amiable, but unhappy friend! little did I imagine wenh you said, 'Return again to the world, and who knows but what Albina may reward your struggles!' That your prognostic would be more than realized! I considered your words as only spoken with a generous meaning, for while you practised virtue from inclination, you rightly concluded that some powerful reward must be held out to tempt the guilty Isidor."

To these conversations Laurentini listened with the interest we feel at hearing a beloved object praised. This was her favourite theme, and had Montaldi required a more powerful advocate in her bosom, the detail of his virtues had obtained it; all that could be urged in his favour only increased the good opinion she had on their first meeting honoured him with.

Believing him injured, he was ever present to her thoughts, and her sincerest wishes offered up for the welfare that so deeply interested her. When she beheld the benignant effects of his exalted worth, could she do otherwise than admire?

With real pleasure she congratulated Elvira, nor felt an emotion of envy at the happiness which was denied her.

"Shall I complain," said she, with energy, "or call my fate hard when I enjoy so many blessings that are withheld from the deserving Montaldi? No tender friend soothes with genuine sympathy his distress; the voice he hears is that of a stranger, ill fitted for the arduous task. His wounds want the balm that alone can heal them, and may he find it. Softly," said she, as with silent eloquence her lovely eyes were directed toward heaven.

CHAP. XXXII.

At length the cheerful morn appeared; the sky was cloudless and clothed in a clear soft azure, the sun shone with more than common splendour, and added to the picturesque prospect.

At an early hour all the inhabitants of the pallazzo had arisen, busily engaged in the events that were to take place.

The peasantry and neighbouring cot-

tagers by their unfeigned joy testified how large a share they took in the happiness of their benefactor. Theirs was not the servile language of mean adulation, it was uninfluenced, save by the heartfelt gratitude that dictated it.

The nuptials of the Marchese Ernesto and the Senora Rosalia were celebrated with the utmost pomp and magnificence, while those of the Marquis di Almanza and the Senora Rameraz, the Senor del Urbino and the Senora di Almanza were solemnized with equal splendour, and seemed to promise similar bliss.

The smile, the innocent gaiety and mirthful jest which bespoke the happiness of his humble guests, afforded the truest pleasure to the duca's benevolent heart; it was the language of Nature, and by him more highly prized than the

refined, but less sincere congratulations of his more illustrious visitors. Fawning servility he despised, while blunt freedom also displeased him; but becoming spirit gained his approbation.

His vassals, unchecked by oppression, lived cheerful and happy, owning that where inclination combines with duty, dependence is no longer a state of trial. He contributed to their ease and comfort, while they in turn, by unshaken fidelity and cheerful obedience, afforded him satisfaction that subjection could never obtain. His power over them was unlimited.

Not a countenance was seen clouded, not a tongue was silent amid this scene of universal joy.

How striking a contrast it formed to

the misery experienced by Di Viralva; he had to witness this day of days with the utmost anguish; confined to his bed, not so much from bodily as mental pain, he had to reflect on the downfall of his schemes.

The festivity that presided at the pallazzo added a deeper shade to his melancholy; gloomy, desponding, and sullen, he spoke not; even his favourite Theodore was excluded his presence. Having no further occasion for his services, himself was neglected, incapable of repentance, like a fettered culprit; he was only inoffensive inasmuch as his power was restrained.

He knew now all hope was fled; he could no more disturb the peace of the Almerini family—their bliss was consummate; a debtor to their clemency,

he felt no gratitude for the mercy he meanly supplicated. But a weightier subject engrossed his attention. The demand of Lorenzo must be either complied with or refused. In the latter, there was danger; the resentment of Manfredoni and Nicolo would be aroused—he could not pacify them with as much ease as Lorenzo.

"My fate's decreed!" he exclaimed. "I cannot protract the inevitable hour; Almeria, you are revenged; it is your brother's arm that aims the blow; but, for him, Lorenzo, my uncomplaining victim, had resigned his breath in obscurity.—Nicolo too, your injuries, though manifold, had met with no redress; your reproaches had become stifled, unheeded; I should have treated them with no consideration.—But, Manfredoni, how, how refute his charge!

Almeria, I robbed you of life, and deprived you of what you valued far more. The hour of retribution is come—that hour which your sad remembrance has oft painfully reminded me of."

His anguish had near produced mental derangement; and the amiable Lorenzo, deeply affected, retired.

Manfredoni and Nicolo did the same.

"Senor," said Nicolo, addressing Lorenzo, "call me not severe, when I say your sensibility is ill bestowed; the affliction of Viralva is feigned, and produced more by disappointment than contrition. He, who for a series of years has unrelenting practised the most abominable acts, cannot reform so suddenly. It is easy to express what we do not feel."

Lorenzo made no reply, but felt the full force of what he urged; for though compassionate and lenient to the erring, he could not totally forget the cruelty with which he had been treated. The taunts of Viralva, when rightly judging he had found friends to espouse his cause—the solitary days and nights of horror he had passed, were painfully revived.

Manfredoni, who guessed what was passing in his mind, strengthened the new-formed resolution he had made.

"This dissembler," said Angelo, "shall trifle with us no longer. Shall the rightful heir of Lorenzo di Viralva waste his youth in shameful obscurity, and passively suffer a usurper to enjoy his title?—Forbid the thought! Be not the slave of apathy, but arouse yourself from this soul-debasing indolence."

This was the language Manfredoni used to bend him to his purpose, and he succeeded. Totally governed by his directions, he acted with conformity, and promised implicit obedience.

The young marchese and marchesa, supremely blest, forgot that there was such a disgraced being as Viralva.

The Marquis and Marchioness di Almanza felt that exquisite happiness which flows from mutual affection; their sensations were undefinable, and defied the power of description.

In contemplating the felicity of a sister he tenderly loved, Alonzo felt an increase to his pleasure.

Elvira, united to the Senor del Ur-

bino, found her expectations more than realized. He was kind, tender, and affectionate—attentive, and eager to anticipate her every wish, he blended fondness with rationality, and preserved the happy medium.

Laurentini, cheerful because she saw others so, had not time to think of herself, and with sweet placidity heard the well meant raillery of her friends. She repaid their efforts with smiles, nor bestowed on them one serious thought, had they not brought Montaldi to her recollection. That mysterious being, of whom she incessantly thought—"Where could he be—where had he concealed himself?" For Don de Isidor had frequently sought him, but could gain no intelligence.

"A fate as merciless as his enemies,"

said Isidor, "prevents him from enjoying the bliss the knowledge that I am happy would communicate."

The reformed Albina, a true penitent, would join with him in prayers for the author of her happiness. He had restored to her a husband whom she loved to distraction; and her lovely eyes, full of supplication, were cast towards Heaven, as if entreating its protection for the Mysterious Florentine.

The Marchese Almerini, who had made every enquiry after Montaldi, with the rest, gave up the pursuit, though not without much regret, for the good opinion he had ever honoured him with, experienced no diminution, and to have rendered him every assistance would have afforded him the highest satisfaction.

The looks of Laurentini, if looks could speak, had expressed the thanks she dared not utter. Time had not diminished that passion which gained strength by concealment.

The duca, one morning, was surprised by an unexpected visit from the Senor Manfredoni. He announced the death of Viralva, and explained a mystery which much astonished him.

The reluctant Viralva, compelled to do the justice he had so long denied, had the mortification of beholding the much injured Lorenzo restored to his hereditary possessions. Manfredoni and Nicolo, not to be amused by his artifice, left him no avenue to escape.

With the loudest acclamations of joy, all declared Lorenzo di Viralva the

rightful heir of his father, the Marchese di Viralva; and by the unfeigned delight they testified, convinced the grateful Lorenzo that the virtues of his departed parent were still remembered by them.

With fervent and pious thanks the young marchese acknowledged that a good name outlives the tomb, and exists after death.

Like the cheered traveller, at his journey's end, he forgot the tempest that was passed; the clouds had dispersed, and the sunshine of peace illumined his hitherto chequered path.

The amiable Manfredoni, the author of his bliss, reaped the reward that most afforded pleasure to his benevolent heart; it arose from his being instru-

mental in promoting the happiness of the son of his benefactor.

Thus had, he whose interfering hand snatched Manfredoni from oblivion, disgrace, and indigence, secured a friend to avenge the persecution of his orphan son, to espouse his cause, and finally to call him from an ignominious seclusion, into that sphere he was born to adorn—to repay to the son obligations conferred by the father.

And now I make no doubt the reader will cheerfully recognize in the Marchese Lorenzo di Viralva, Vincent Montaldi, the Mysterious Florentine!

Acquainted with his virtues, perhaps I have been anticipated. By turns called an assassin, a robber, a spy, and

and an inquisitor, he can only exclaim, "Good people, am I to blame? The trouble was of your own creating, the stories of your own invention, and the appellations of your own bestowing. That proneness in human nature to reject good, and believe bad, induced you to pronounce me guilty—that self-assumed prerogative of condemning the erring, tempted you to pass sentence on me for crimes of non-commission. Acquit me, as I do you, for your fault is venial."

At universal peace with the whole world, Lorenzo remembered no more those taunts that had wounded his susceptible bosom. When excluded and shut out of society, he was called the Mysterious Florentine; it was now he reaped his reward, and enjoyed the fruits of his honorable forbearance, for the

Senora Laurentini blessed with her hand this amiable sufferer.

Compelled, in the solemn silence of night, to take an oath the most sacred and binding to a Catholic, that he would never by word or deed seek to discover who he was, or willingly associate with strangers, but fly from them, though his honour should be thereby impeached, or his humanity called in question; and this solemn oath was sworn while a stiletto was held impending over his head, menacing him with instant death unless the cruel exaction was complied with.

And whether he has kept the tremendous oath I shall call upon the reader to determine. Witness his flight when hearing the cry of distress—the self-denial he practised when urged by

Ernesto to discover who he was—the conflict he must have sustained when conscious that by the observance of the fatal injunction, he suffered in the opinion of the senora, nay, lost her entirely.

CHAP. XXXIII.

APPEARANCES, which are oft deceitful, conspired to stamp with guilt the secresy of the Florentine; each act misinterpreted, increased rather than removed the suspicions that were entertained of his integrity.

Viralva, acquainted with his every movement, pursued his steps with everlasting hate. The accident of the Senor di Bartolo, awakened fears for his own safety.

Lorenzo had proved himself incapable of withstanding temptation, his humanity had yielded, and the bitter conviction urged him to exclaim, "I am perjured."

This allusion to his oath filled the bosom of Laurentini with the most terrible apprehensions.

Altidore, trembling for the consequence when informed by Pauliana of the charms of Laurentini, thought of means more permanent to ensure his security, than trusting to the mere honour of Lorenzo. Hence those terrific sights that nearly deprived Ernesto of reason—the illumination of the forest, and the hideous sight of the murdered traveller, whose disfigured and mangled appearance was well calculated to inspire fear.

On a mind thus harrowed and filled

with supernatural terror, the appalling accent of the spectre might well make a deep impression.

The emissaries of Viralva, whom Ernesto mistook for peasants, acted well their part; those remarks, seemingly unintentional, were the effect of premeditation.

"The ghost," they said, "took the way to the casino."

Emboldened by the effect the assertion produced on Almerini, they declared it was Montaldi himself.

The emotion of Ernesto excited their risibility, and what perhaps had passed unnoticed, received an additional weight by the observation of Gustavas—"For though I do not think it was the Señor

Montaldi, I fear it was some one equally as terrible."

To finish the gloomy train of horrors, the mysterious question of "What is it you fear?" uttered in appalling accents, completely deprived Ernesto of all fortitude.

Thankful for his escape, he nevertheless felt his curiosity powerfully awakened, and on the following night he resolved to gratify it. This was what Altidore expected, and to his trusty Theodore he assigned the arduous task of arranging the whole dangerous exploit.

The men who insolently bid Ernesto submit, aroused his indignation, till disarmed by a sight which nearly petrified him; it was no less than Vincent Mon-

taldi! in such company too! What were his sensations when he beheld the prevention of the two ruffians, and witnessed the anguish of Montaldi?

To obtain a solution of the mystery that perplexed him, at an early hour he walked to the casino; its total demolition astonished him. This was the act of Viralva; effectually to remove Lorenzo was his wish, and in such a manner as to impress Ernesto with an unfavourable opinion of him.

Sensibly affected by the neglect of Lorenzo, Almerini endeavoured to banish him from his memory, but the effort was vain, and the warning of the insinuating stranger, "Beware of Montaldi, beneath his smile lurks danger," tended to perpetuate what he wished forgotten.

The person who addressed him was no other than Viralva, who, depending on his own agility, eluded pursuit, and his person disguised by dress, escaped detection; in the meanwhile, the unfortunate Lorenzo was his prisoner, and doomed to a fate the most severe.

Altidore, who was well acquainted with the human heart, knew also its weakness, he granted to Lorenzo permission to walk out at midnight, knowing what use he would make of this indulgence.

The unhappy victim of hopeless love bent his steps toward the pallazzo, there to enjoy a sight of her he valued more than life; on his return, Viralva would examine his countenance, and judge from its expression whether he had succeeded.

Delighted, he congratulated himself on his success; but soon his pleasure became converted into the acutest pain. Montaldi returned not; he was distracted, his schemes were ruined and betrayed—desperation was in the idea.

The unhappy Lorenzo had been seized by Orsino's men, and by them conveyed to his desolate abode; there he happily procured the deliverance of the captive Rosalia, and refusing her invitation, returned to the castello.

With joy unutterable Viralva beheld him, but when he related the adventure that had befel him, his rage was ungovernable. Rosalia, the object of all his solicitude, was rescued from the fate he had anticipated; he raved, swore, and uttered all that disappointment like his could dictate.

Lorenzo unacquainted with the cause, suffered from the violent effect it produced; Viralva, unusually severe, suffered him not to quit the castello, unless attended by some of his spies, nor would he ever have enjoyed that liberty, had it not been to further his own vile schemes, for relying on the strict honour of Lorenzo, he knew his silence would increase the unfavourable opinion entertained of him.

Hence arose the mysterious conduct of Lorenzo which so much offended Almerini; the Mysterious Florentine had only returned his salutation by an inclination of the head; unpardonable insult!—he would resent it.

To encourage him in this resolution, he heard the disgraceful tale related by Janetta, when at the cottage of Caruca; Montaldi was unequivocally pronounced

the captain of banditti, and owed this imputation to a mere casualty.

In the forest, the scene of his nightly visitation, he encountered some of Orsino's men, one had been desperately wounded, and Lorenzo, in affording him assistance, daubed his clothes with blood, as described by Janetta.

This gave rise to the idea that he had been wounded; using the freedom his situation allowed, the gondolier's wife presumed to interrogate him, and pronouncing the word capitano, with a significant look, caused that emotion which was ascribed to guilt.

Thus did circumstance combine to affix the foul stain that sullied the fair fame of Montaldi.

That suspicion ever attendant on the

guilty, induced Altidore, on being informed by his spies of the meetings of Lorenzo and Laurentini, to remove the unhappy victim from Florence, to the Castello di Viralva, where he was accidentally seen by Manfredoni, the only man he feared, because the only man living who knew Lorenzo.

The Senora Laurentini, the innocent cause of his removal and subsequent misery, proved the eventual source of his restoration to happiness, tranquillity, and love.

"Now," said the delighted Ernesto, pressing the hand of the young Marchese, "I may proudly admit you to my friendship, an offer you will not reject, when no longer Vincent Montaldi, but one whose qualities are such, that since they are known, place him on an equality with Ernesto Almerini."

"Your memory is retentive," said Lorenzo, returning with warmth his embrace. "Let us henceforward live as brothers and friends."

"Agreed," replied Ernesto, gaily; "only remember to keep your promise."

Manfredoni, serenely happy, lived constantly with the young Marchese, who proved himself sensible of the essential service he had rendered him.

The Senor Nicolo, re-instated in his hereditary honours, found the good opinion he had entertained of the integrity of his cousin Marascotti more than verified.

Viralva, as has been stated, was not dead; the body of his colleague Portiri, was substituted, and served to deceive the Marchese Lorenzo.

Nicolo, by a strange coincidence of events, confined him in the very same place that had been for so many years his prison; there he inflicted similar pangs, which I shall describe in his own words.

"Oh! Altidore! could I but make you suffer as many days of misery as I endured; count o'er as many weary nights, I would most freely forgive you; not merely by word, but in verity. Let me but be thy gaoler, raise to your lips the bitter draught, and I'm content. This hand shall present the measured morsel, quick turn the lock that shuts you out from sweet liberty; exultant I depart, and add the horrors of uncertainty to your fate. As many years as forlorn I lingered, so shall you; and when the allotted period is expired, clasp you to my breast, and as a brother, pardon."

Those hopes, which had proved the solace of despair, were realized; Viralva, clasped to the bosom of Comte Nicolo, ingenuously confessed how highly deserved was that punishment, which even he could not call severe.

Subdued by compunction, nature yielded, and only in death did Viralva find the peace he had in vain sought.

He was privately interred, and his melancholy fate concealed from the amiable Marchese Lorenzo, who with his adored Laurentini, enjoyed the most perfect state of human bliss.

"To thee, my Laurentini," would the enraptured Lorenzo say, "I owe my peace, my joy, my every thing; had not my uncle doubted my integrity and suspected my honour, he had remained satisfied, and depended on my secresy;

when informed of my accidental meetings with you, had he possessed confidence, his distrust would not have induced him to tear me from my enviable solitude; I had not then been seen and recognized by Manfredoni. But did the calm security of virtue attend the wicked, where would be the distinction? Self-condemned, too often inadvertence or casualty betray them to that punishment vice can never escape."

Then would he smile and changing the conversation; talk of his bliss, praise his Creator, and protect the oppressed.

THE END.

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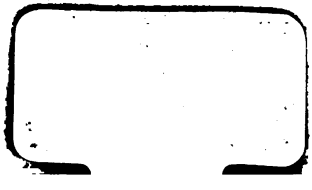
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